



Toppesfield Parish Council



Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 7th March 2024 at Toppesfield Village Hall at 7.30pm

24/31. Attendance and Apologies for Absence:

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Councillor Alan Collard
Councillor Jeremy Graves
Councillor Amanda Smith
Councillor Frances Winter

Also, in attendance:

Kaaren Berry – Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Councillor Kitty Bourlet
Councillor Paula Edwards-Holmes
Councillor Jane Daines
County Councillor Peter Schwier
District Councillor Richard van Dulken

24/32. Declaration of Members' interests in agenda items

There were no declarations of interest reported.

24/33. Open Session – opportunity for members of the Parish to address the Parish Council.

District councillor van Dulken sent in his report:

- The 2024/25 BDC budget was approved at Full Council on 19th February, with no Councillor voting against, with the BDC portion of the total Council Tax bills increased by 2.96% - approx. 11p per week for a Band D dwelling, which is one of the lowest rates in Essex.
- The Councillors' Community Grant will continue during the coming year, with the same rate as this year, of £1,250 per Councillor.
- Re your Action 24/36.1, I can confirm that the Application for £312 from the PC, for dog waste bags and wall holders is allowable and will be paid over in April, the new financial year.
- I am pleased to have learnt that there will be patching of potholes ("patching") on Great Yeldham Road very shortly -as the Clerk is aware this will involve a closure or reduced access to the road during 18-20 March.
- The most recent news I have on Wethersfield (following a meeting on the site a few weeks ago) is that there are 550-600 users, and we were informed that no crime had been attributed to the migrant residents. The Home Office has advised that they intend to use Wethersfield for 3 years, with a 6-month decommissioning period at the end of 3 years. On a more positive note, the prisons team at the Department of Justice appears to have no further interest in Wethersfield as a prison site, as better located sites have been approved.
- I have been appointed as the Braintree District representative on the Essex Flood Partnership Board
- which meets 4 times a year. I appreciate that floods from rivers are not a major issue in Toppesfield but the remit of the Board does extend to surface water and drainage issues, while not being involved in day-to-day maintenance which is generally Essex Highways, or Anglian Water.

- As you may have seen in the news, BDC Operations were able to assist Uttlesford with their bin collections, over 16 days in February, with no adverse effect on our operations.
- BDC has announced a new small grants scheme providing grants of up to £10,000 to start or enhance community projects which support residents with the cost of living. Any non-profit community group can apply as long as they can evidence that the project supports one of the main objectives of the “Cost of Living Fund”, has a clear purpose, and benefits District residents.

24/34. Minutes of the last Parish Council Meeting

The minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 1st February 2024 were agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting.

24/35. Matters Arising not on the agenda – for report only.

Clerk update the Parish Council on solicitor costs for the sale of part of the Park Lane car park. Discussions took place on the possibility of installing a high speed charging point and if half of the car park was a big enough plot for this.

24/36. Actions from previous meeting:

- 24/36.1 Cllr Bourlet to apply to the Councillors Community Grant Fund for the purchase of dog poo bags with the aim to reduce dog waste left around the parish. Application form was submitted and was approved for payment in April 2024.
- 24/36.2 Clerk review EALC’s comments regarding proposed contract and job description – the documents were reviewed and circulated for Councillors comments.
- 24/36.3 Clerk to draft policies as mentioned in the contract for Councillors review. Policies were drafted and circulated for Councillor comments. Councillors to review policies prior to the next Parish Council meeting.
- 24/36.4 Cllr Bourlet to write an article for locations for tree planting for the March/April newsletter. The article has been written and is in the newsletter.
- 24/36.5 Clerk to design a poster for the litter pick / coffee morning on the 23 March 2024. Posters have been created and displayed.
- 24/36.6 Cllr Graves to explore locations for historical archives and contact others who were interested in this project. Cllr Graves offered to scan old photos for archive purposes. Cllr Collard stated there are grants available for this type of project and he will look into this.
- 24/36.7 Clerk to arrange loan of litter pick equipment from Braintree District Council.
- 24/36.8 Clerk to contact Barclays re a bank mandate change of signatories. Forms have been received and Cllrs are completing them.
- 24/36.9 Cllr Edwards-Holmes to research rules regarding Common Land. Information regarding Common Land was circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting. It was agreed that the Parish Council will issue a letter reminding residents that Common Land is not an area for bonfires and that it is not in the community spirit to leave bonfires unsupervised.

24/37. Internal Practices and management for the Parish Council:

- 24/37.1 Neighbourhood Plan update. Cllr Collard reported the grant funding has been received and Paul Munson has been engaged to progress the Neighbourhood Plan and the RCCE will do the analysis for questionnaires that are sent out. Also, confirmation as to whether an up-to-date Housing Needs Survey is required has not yet been received.
- 24/37.2 Wethersfield Airfield and Asylum centre update – updates have been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting and the WASC minutes are available on the parish council website.
- 24/37.3 Coffee morning and annual litter pick, 23 March 2024 – final arrangements. A budget of £50 for the Easter Egg hunt and £25 for the coffee morning refreshments was agreed. Cllr Bourlet will organise the Easter Egg Hunt while other Councillors will assist with organising the litter pick and coffee morning.
- 24/37.4 Cllr Bourlet circulated a quote for new equipment at the playing field – it was agreed two further quotes need to be gained. The possibility of installing water at the pavilion is also to be looked at. A holistic plan for the whole playing field needs to be set out.

24/38. Correspondence Received:

24/38.1 EALC Legal & County Updates, Essex County Council Highways Highlights, RCCE Essex Warbler – circulated to all Councillors prior to meeting.

24/38.2 Braintree Local Highways Panel - The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2024 are available to view on the Council’s website at the following link:-

<https://braintree.cmis.uk.com/braintree/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/1257/Committee/13/Default.aspx>

24/23.3 Stansted Airport Watch – their latest newsletter is available on the parish website.

24/39. Financial Accounts:

24/39.1 To receive the Clerk's Report indicating receipts and payments requiring approval. The report was received and payments were approved.

24/39.2 Bank mandate – forms for completion. The forms are being completed by councillors.

24/39.3 Proposal to engage Judith Fletcher to prepare the year end accounts. It was agreed to engage Judith Fletcher again this year to compile the year end accounts and AGAR forms.

24/39.4 Parish Council Telephone – proposal to sign up to a yearly contract – this was agreed to sign up to a £10 monthly bundle as this will save the Parish council money rather than the current top-up system. Clerk to progress.

24/40 Highways:

24/40.1 Potholes on the Great Yeldham Road are due to be repaired week commencing 18th March 2024.

24/40.2. Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 – Section 14(1) Temporary Traffic Regulation Order of The Green, Finchingfield . Please see the following link <https://one.network/?tm=137443572> to find details of the intended closure of The Green, due to commence on 18th March 2024 for 3 days. The closure is required for the safety of the public and workforce while Essex County Council undertakes remedial reinstatement.

24/41. Planning:

Application No:	Description	Address	Action
24/00012/HH	Proposed annexe / cartlodge outbuilding. Removal of modern stable, and low quality lean to extensions to historic outbuilding. Proposed new vehicular access and driveway.	Scotneys Farm House Scotneys Lane Great Yeldham CO9 4HG	Braintree District Council planning decision: Application Granted

24/42. Communications:

No items were discussed under this heading.

24/43. Information exchange / Items for the next agenda

No items were discussed under this heading.

24/44. Date of the next meeting:

The next Parish Council Meeting is scheduled to be held on 4th April 2024 at 7.30pm at Toppesfield Village Hall.

24/45. Close

The Chair closed the meeting at 8.55pm

Signed:

Dated:

Action Summary:

- Cllrs to review Clerk’s contract and job description following changes made.
- Cllrs to review polices as mentioned in the Clerks contract ahead of their adoption.
- Cllr Collard to seek grants for digitalising historic photographs.
- Clerk to write a letter regarding Common Land and the use of bonfires on such land.
- Cllr Bourlet & Winter to arrange meetings with representatives from two other playground equipment companies regarding possibilities for the playing field.
- Clerk to progress a more efficient mobile phone contract.

Appendix A

Accounts -7th March 2024				
			£	
Community Account				
	Closing Balance as at 4th March 2024		£37,084.57	
	All previous payments issued balance should be		<u>£28,815.32</u>	
Income Received	Included in the balance figure of 4th March 2024			
06.02.24	Compass Energy - Newsletter advertising		£15.00	
28.02.24	Groundwork UK R/C - Neighbourhood Plan Grant		£7,683.00	
28.02.24	Essex Association of Local Councils - CiLCA Bursary		£581.25	
			<u>£8,279.25</u>	
Direct Debits	Included in the balance figure of 4th March 2024			
01.03.24	EDF Energy - The Pavilaion electricity supply		£10.00	
			£0.00	
			<u>£10.00</u>	
				Unrecoverable VAT
Payments to be approved:				
Date of invoice		Chq No:		
29.02.24	Paul Clark Printing - Newsletter March/April	By Bacs	£260.00	£0.00
01.03.24	HMRC - Tax on February salary	By Bacs	£47.80	£0.00
01.03.24	K Berry - February salary	By Bacs	£695.15	£0.00
			<u>£1,002.95</u>	
			£36,081.62	